

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 02511 161943Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W
-----011443 161948Z /41

O R 161606Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5447
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

S E C R E T AMMAN 2511

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, JO, LE, IS, XF
SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING - SOUTH LEBANON

SUMMARY: I SAW HUSSEIN MARCH 16 AND DESCRIBED FOR HIM
SITUATION AS WE NOW SEE IT. ISRAELIS INDICATE
THAT THEIR OBJECTIVE IS TO WITHDRAW
BUT NOT UNDER CONDITIONS WHICH WOULD PERMIT FEDAYEEN TO RETURN
TO OPERATE AGAINST THEM. WE SUPPORT SECURITY AND TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY OF LEBANON AND BELIEVE THAT ACTION IN UN CONTEXT,
POSSIBLY INCORPORATING PEACEKEEPING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE
AREA, WILL BE NECESSARY. HUSSEIN INDICATED THAT HE AND
JORDANIANS ARE ANGRY AT ISRAELI MOVE AND FEEL WITHDRAWAL
IMMEDIATELY IS REQUIRED, OTHERWISE ANOTHER TERRITORY WILL
BE ADDED TO ARGUE ABOUT WITH RESPECT TO 242. KING SEES BEGIN
MOTIVES IN MOVING AS DESIGNED TO SPLIT ARABS FURTHER, HOLD
ON TO TERRITORY TO BARGAIN AWAY TO KEEP THE WEST BANK AND GAZA,
AND TO THREATEN JORDAN AND SYRIA FROM A MORE ADVANCED POSITION
IN SOUTH LEBANON. (KING SEES SOUTH LEBANON AS ONE ARM OF A
PINCERS AGAINST SYRIA; NORTH JORDAN IS THE SECOND). SYRIA

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AND EGYPT WILL NOW COME UNDER MORE POPULAR PRESSURE TO DO
SOMETHING. KING CONTEMPLATING SPEAKING OUT IN NEXT FEW DAYS
WITH CALL FOR AN ARAB SUMMIT AND DECISIONS BY THE ARAB
LEADERS ON WHAT STRATEGY TO PURSUE NEXT. KING HAD NO CLEAR IDEA
OF WHAT SHOULD BE DONE AND URGED US TO GET ISRAELIS OUT OF
SOUTH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE - "AFTER TWO WEEKS IT WILL BE TOO
LATE," END SUMMARY.

1. I SAW HUSSEIN ALONG WITH DCM SUDDARTH IN AFTERNOON MARCH 16 IN RESPONSE TO MY REQUEST TO GO OVER WITH HIM SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON.

2. WE REVIEWED SITUATION ON THE GROUND. HUSSEIN SEEMED TO THINK THAT SOME FIGHTING STILL GOING ON, PERHAPS MOPPING UP OPERATIONS, PERHAPS EXPANSION OF THE ISRAELI PERIMETER. HE SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT ISRAELIS HAVE TWO DIVISIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON.

3. I THEN DESCRIBED OUR GENERAL INTENTION GET ISRAELIS TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON STATEMENT THAT THEY DID NOT INTEND TO REMAIN, THAT THEIR OBJECTIVE IS TO WITHDRAW IF FEDAYEEN CAN BE KEPT OUT AND THAT WE FELT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO REPLACE VACUUM LEFT BY ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL WITH SOME SORT OF FORCE IN ORDER TO AVOID RECREATING CONDITIONS THAT LED TO INCURSION IN THE FIRST PLACE. HE KNEW LEBANESE ARMY WAS NON-EXISTENT. IN CONFIDENCE I TOLD HIM THAT WE WERE CONSIDERING WHAT THE UN COULD DO. THERE WERE CALLS FOR A MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND WE FELT IT NECESSARY TO MOVE WITH SOME SPEED. WE HOPED FOR JORDANIAN SUPPORT FOR SENSIBLE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION.

4. KING THEN MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

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(A) FOR SOME TIME HE HAD WARNED, EVEN BEFORE 1967, HIS ARAB BROTHERS THAT ISRAELIS MIGHT MOVE INTO SOUTH LEBANON. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GET THEM OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IF THEY ARE THERE LONGER THAN TWO WEEKS THEY WILL NOT BE EASY TO DISLODGE.

(B) HE BELIEVES THE ISRAELI MOVE HAS OBJECTIVE OTHER THAN MERELY CLEARING OUT FEDAYEEN. THEY HAVE ACHIEVED A FURTHER SPLITTING OF THE ARABS. IN ADDITION, INCREASING PRESSURE WILL BE PUT ON GOVERNMENTS. HE WAS ANGRY AND HE FELT HIS OWN PEOPLE WERE MAD. SYRIA WAS IN WORSE SHAPE HAVING TAKEN ON THE PROTECTION OF THE PLO AND THE REJECTIONISTS AT THE TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS CONFERENCE. ASAD KNEW IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO ATTACK THE ISRAELIS; IT WAS ALSO DANGEROUS FOR HIM AND THE OTHER ARAB LEADERS TO SIT ON THE SIDE LINES FOR TOO LONG, PARTICULARLY IF THE ISRAELIS STAYED IN LEBANON.

(C) THE ISRAELIS HAD IMPROVED THEIR MILITARY POSITION VIS A VIS SYRIA IN THE EVENT OF A FURTHER CONFLICT. THE ISRAELI FORCE, PART WAY AROUND MOUNT HERMON WAS THE NORTHERN Pincer OF A MOVEMENT WHICH COULD ENVELOPE SYRIAN ARMY AND CUT OFF DAMASCUS FROM ITS FORCES IN LEBANON. THE SOUTHERN Pincer

WAS NORTH JORDAN. THIS IS WHY HE HAD VISITED HIS FORCES IN THAT AREA YESTERDAY. HE WAS CLEARLY CONCERNED OVER THE POSSIBLE SPREAD OF THE CONFLICT.

(D) FINALLY SOUTH LEBANON AND NORTH JORDAN COULD BE TRADED AWAY FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.

5. HUSSEIN CONCLUDED BY REMARKING THAT IT WILL PROBABLY BE NECESSARY FOR HIM TO SPEAK TO HIS OWN PEOPLE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS ABOUT THE SITUATION. HE WOULD CALL A MEETING OF THE ARAB LEADERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO UNIFY THEIR POLICY AND DECIDE WHAT STRATEGY TO PURSUE IN THE FACE OF THIS ISRAELI MOVE. HUSSEIN INDICATED HE HAD NO CLEAR IDEAS ON WHAT THE ARABS SHOULD DO NEXT IN THIS FLUID SITUATION BEYOND
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TRYING TO GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER.

6. I ASKED HUSSEIN ABOUT WHAT SARKIS HAD TOLD HIM WHEN THEY SPOKE ON THE TELEPHONE YESTERDAY. HUSSEIN SAID ALL SARKIS COULD DO WAS INDICATE FRUSTRATION AND SAY THAT LEBANON STILL HOPED FOR THE BEST.

7. IN RESPONSE I INDICATED THAT WE CONTINUED TO PUT PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON THE PEACE PROCESS AND THAT WE WOULD WANT TO DEAL WITH THE CURRENT PROBLEM IN A WAY WHICH GETS ATTENTION AND EFFORTS FOCUSSED BACK AGAIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ON THAT CENTRAL ACTIVITY.

8. COMMENT: HUSSEIN APPEARED SCEPTICAL THAT WE COULD GET MUCH DONE ALTHOUGH HE SEEMED PLEASED WITH THE POINT ABOUT OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE AN ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. HE DID NOT REACT TO THE GENERAL POINT I MADE ABOUT PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS. HIS OWN REMARKS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE DOES NOT HOLD OUT MUCH HOPE FOR THE PEACE EFFORTS, IS WORRIED ABOUT COLLAPSE AND RADICALIZATION IN THE OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS AND COUNTS THE ISRAELI MOVE INTO SOUTH LEBANON AS YET ANOTHER COMPLICATING SET OF FACTORS IN THIS ALREADY MASSIVELY COMPLEX PROBLEM. I PROMISED THAT WE WOULD KEEP IN TOUCH.
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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, REPRISALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978AMMAN02511
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780117-0964
Format: TEL
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780363/aaaacarq.tel
Line Count: 161
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ba324bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3316573
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TALK WITH KING - SOUTH LEBANON SUMMARY: I SAW HUSSEIN MARCH 16 AND DESCRIBED FOR HIM SITUATION AS WE NOW SEE IT. ISRAELIS INDICATE
TAGS: PGOV, JO, LE, IS, XF, (HUSSEIN I)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ba324bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014